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Renaissance concepts of fortune in the plays of Christopher Marlowe

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RENAISSANCE CONCEPTS OF FORTUNE IN THE PLAYS OF CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

by

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PREFACE

It is possible to reverse a typical Elizabethan image which states that the world is a play and to propose that every play is a world or at least contains a world. Every play must have a setting, and this setting is something more than a geographical location given by the playwright, something more extensive than the seacoast of Bohemia. If the agents of the drama perform actions and if certain consequences follow such actions, then the setting of the play may be said to be a world in which certain actions are possible and in which certain consequences follow the action. The world of the play is a world built up from certain moral-philosophical premises, whether of not the play is essentially a play of ideas. Sometimes these premises are conscious, but more often they are unconscious, part of a common heritage of ideas and basic assumptions about the world. One may say that the world of Shakespeare's plays was usually a world of order, that the basic premises were those of the Christian humanists. One may say the same for Milton's world. The cheapest melodrama sets forth a world in which virtue is rewarded and vice punished, a world of rational order and poetic justice. It is difficult to say whether the world of the play represents the world view of the playwright, but this is not a basic issue here. The point is that all plays have such an unstated pattern which one may call the world of the play.

There are, however, certain dangers in the study of such worlds and their connection with broader patterns of thought or intellectual atmospheres. These atmospheres can only be represented by key figures who seem to sum up in their writing the prevailing ideas in the atmosphere. No amount of enumeration can discount individual variations or supply a clear cause and effect relationship. When one uses Machiavelli to typify the intellectual atmosphere of naturalism in which a certain Elizabethan play fits, for example, he cannot guarantee that the Machiavellian ideas are gathered directly from Machiavelli's works. He only supposes, from the statements of other writers of the time of Machiavelli's greatest influence, that Machiavelli's ideas were freely circulated as typical and that they were accessible to the author, if the works were not. In the absence of diaries, commonplace books, and direct quotations, one can state the case only in these terms. He posits intellectual atmospheres and describes them in terms of typical figures or figures which seem to

have been typical.

A word might be added about the language used in writing about the world of the play or the world view expressed by the play. In analysing the work in terms of the speeches and the implied actions, one may most conveniently write of the implied actions and presented speeches as though they were historical facts; and they do form a segment of the history of the world of the play. A reservation, nevertheless, is necessary and must be recognized. A statement, "Zenocrate loves Tamburlaine," must be translated, "Zenocrate is represented by speech and implied action as loving Tamburlaine." If this rubric seems unnecessarily elementary, one need only call to mind the great body of work on the offstage lives of Shakespearean heroes--an illustration of the frequent confusion of drama and life.[1] The life of the agents in a drama is real only in the world of the drama and cannot safely be extended outside it. The inferences of the literary student may have a lower probability rating than the inferences of the scientist, but the literary student is not released from the demands of sanity.

This dissertation does not pretend to be definitive. It presents a test case, opening up an area little explored before and capable of further applications. Perhaps the first chapters may seem needlessly detailed or irrelevant, but the background must be filled in if the concepts are to be understood.

I would like to express my indebtedness to Dr. Nan C. Carpenter for her suggestion for the area of the dissertation and for her generous assistance and encouragement during the period of composition. To Professor Robert M. Burgess I am indebted for some illuminating discussions and suggestions on materials.

R. T. T.

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[1]See the excellent essay by L. C. Knights, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" in Explorations (New York, 1947).

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUNDS OF HUMANISTIC CONCEPTS OF FORTUNE

By the time Saint Augustine wrote The City of God (413-26), in which he defined her out of existence, Fortuna had long been a living goddess with rites and votaries. Her origins were obscure,[1] yet her development was consistent with a basic pattern of human thought. Although most philosophical systems tend to reduce the world to an essential order--whether in eternal archetypes or in the pattern of flux[2]--man tends to rely more upon his experience with the temporal, immediate world than upon philosophical convictions. Certainly everyday experience tends to deny order. In the individual event, in the progress of battle, in the premature

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[1]For discussion, see Howard E. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, 1927), chap. i. Three concise articles are : "Fortune," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. IX, 14th ed.; "Fortune (Roman)," "Fortune (Greek)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York, 1920), Vol. VI.

[2]This is demonstrably true of the major classic philosophers, Melesians, Pythagoreans, Platonists. With the ascendancy of Christianity and its triumph in the Middle Ages, thinkers tended even more to stress order; and the belief in order extends into our own time. Not only does it form a part of Catholic philosophy, but it is also the metaphysical basis for much of modern science. For discussion of modern ideas of order, see Angus Armitage, The World of Copernicus (New York, 1951); R. G. Collingwood, An Essay on Metaphysics (London, 1940); and Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York, 1925). Modern science increasingly stresses probability, however.

frost or flood--and the history of man is a long chronicle of war against nature and against other men--there is an irregularity which is difficult for one to reconcile with order or Providence. Primitive peoples, in their magic and early religious stages, tend to distrust even the periodicity of the seasons and resort to ritual to insure some semblance of order.[1] Ideal and well-reasoned concepts are seldom the basis for life, and so every people, not only the Greeks and Romans but also the Chinese and the Hebrews and the Norsemen, developed some concepts of chance and Fortune, random forces which cast their shadows over the whole scheme of existence. For it is obvious on every level of human life that the wicked often prosper and that the race sometimes even goes to the swift.

To the Greeks and to the Romans, Fortuna was a goddess,[2] an active supernatural being which could determine careers or the course of events. To the philosophers, of course, the goddess was merely an allegorization of the principle of chance or accident. To Aristotle[3] who put her into

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[1]Excellent illustrations of this may be found in a work perhaps superseded but yet of value and interest, James Frazer, The Golden Bough (12 vols.; New York, 1907-1920).

[2]See "Personification," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. IX.

[3]Aristotle, Physica, translated by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (London, 1930): "Spontaneity and chance are causes of effects which, though they might result from intelligence or nature, have in fact been caused by something incidentally," Bk. V, 198a. Chance thus ranks among the causes, being the cause of events or behavior which are incidental and not usual.

his systemized universe, she became mere chance, an "uncaused cause"; her vagaries were not so much the work of a supernatural force as of a natural lack of determinism beneath the circle of the moon. But the mass of men, unfortunately, are not Aristotles, and Fortuna survived in the popular mind primarily as a goddess; her cult may possibly have extended into the Middle Ages.[1] Having many specialized forms, among them fortuna mulieribus with a famous temple at Parnaste, she often assumed most of the duties and activities of the other gods also; she became at times fortuna panthea, a fact which clearly indicates the importance of the concept of Fortune in the Graeco-Roman world.

The Graeco-Roman world in the west, however, with its paganism and law and art and culture, had virtually collapsed by the fifth century, and the temples of Fortuna fared no better than the temples of the other dying gods. After a brief resurgence of paganism, Christianity, through syncretism and on a material level through the conversion of temples into churches, almost wiped out the active worship of pagan deity. In 394 Theodosius compelled the Roman Senate to abolish paganism, although the sacking of Rome by Alaric in 410 nearly brought it back again. The old order was gone, however, and it remained for the Church fathers to demolish the pagan cults on an ideological basis as the Christian emperors abolished it by decree.

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[1]This is the opinion of Howard Patch, op. cit., p. 9. There is little evidence to support this, however.

One of the great figures of this period was Augustine, who, writing The City of God as the city of Rome fell, acted as a kind of midwife to the birth of a new age. Although he admitted chance as a necessary condition of free will, he attacked the goddess Fortuna with the rest of the pagan gods. At the same time, he offered an excellent definition and a concept to be of overwhelming importance in the following age:

> How then can the goddess Fortune be now good and now evil? Is she no goddess when she is not good, but is turned immediately into a devil? Why then, how many goddesses are there? . . . But she that is the goddess, is she always good? If so, she is Felicity herself. Why changes she her name then? Because . . . that is Felicity that does follow a man's deserts: that good fortune which lights casually upon good and evil, without any respect of deserts, and is therefore called Fortune . . . If her servants obtain grace at her hands, and get her to stay with them, then she follows merit and is Fortune no more. Where is her definition then? . . . But does not Jupiter send her also whither his pleasure is? Well, if he do, then let him have all the worship to himself.[1]

Perhaps Augustine felt that he had in this argument destroyed Fortuna by definition, but at the same time he describes Fortune as it was to be described later when the goddess worship was dead. Fortune is the source of rewards and evils which fall upon a man regardless of his deserts or merit. This definition was much more important than that of Aristotle, because it was out of the realm of physics and dealt more directly with life. Again Augustine suggested that Fortune (and the argument he employed was obviously not a new one) is an instrument of Jupiter, whom he equated with the Christian

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[1]St. Augustine, The City of God, translated by John Healey (1610) (London, n.d.), Vol. I, Bk. IV, chap. xviii, pp. 128-129.

God; in other words, Fortune is the tool of Providence. The definition and the concept, although not endorsed by Augustine, find repeated expression later.

Certainly Fortune did not die with the triumph of Christianity. As a symbol of vicissitude, of change, of random causes of unusual and often disastrous events, Fortune became an immensely important part of medieval thought. Literature took the symbol of the wheel from the sphere on which the Roman goddess stood, and innumerable references were made to her throughout the Middle Ages:

> The figure of Fortune which Sallustius allows to rule the things in life that "are not uniform" had grown in importance for the classic world as it gave up its gods and despaired of unity in life; by the medieval world it was to be inherited and developed until it should become the vividly concrete expression of fickleness in mortal affairs. Poets, theologians, and all manner of men in the Middle Ages were to picture Fortune's whimsicality, revile her ways, dispute with her as they would dispute with the inexplicability of life itself. They were to create the image of Fortune's wheel and imagine Fortune as governing the round of worldly routine, elevating men to the "sweet fruition of an earthly crown" and casting them down into ruin, all without reason. They were to make her a convenient image of all those ways of God which were past finding out.[1]

Fortune indeed became the symbol of the forces of disorder, the forces which ruled the spheres of chance and mutability, in the center of which sat the earth, the unmoving and hostile home of man.

While Augustine's analysis of Fortune was thus a

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[1]Willard Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy (Berkeley, 1936), p. 29. The popular and major literary uses can be found classified in Howard Patch, op. cit., passim.

final ideological blow to the goddess Fortuna, the idea of Fortune survived as a pattern of thought about life, an allegorization (as she appeared later with her wheel) of the causes of unpredictable events, of injustice and the vicissitudes of fame. If considered at all as a goddess, Fortune was almost an angel, as she was later to be represented, but without any real independent power. To illustrate a new and important phase of the concept of Fortune, one must turn to a work which almost crystallized all the concepts of Fortune after it. This work, one of the most influential of the entire medieval period, is Boethius' The Consolation of Philosophy (ca. 524).

The story of Boethius (and his book is about himself) might have been taken from one of the tragedies of Fortune which would fill so many anthologies almost eight hundred years later. Originally a scholar, Boethius distinguished himself in politics, rising from consul to patricius and at last to master of offices under Theodoric. Accused of conspiring against the emperor, Boethius was tried and sentenced to death. He composed his book in prison, disgraced, repudiated by the Senate, his property confiscated, and his life virtually ended. He could well write of himself as an almost typical victim of changing Fortune:

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[1]The main details of Boethius' career may be found in Edwin Irwin's introduction to The Consolation of Philosophy, translated by W. V. Cooper (New York, 1943); "Boethius" in Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. III, 14th ed.; "Boethius" in The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York, 1907), Vol. II.

> Ill is it to trust to Fortune's fickle bounty, and yet while she smiled upon me, the hour of gloom had well-nigh overwhelmed my head. Now has the cloud put off its alluring face, wherefore without scruple my life drags out its wearying delays.[1]

However convinced he was that God rules the world by law, Boethius had nevertheless to question the injustice, the disorder everywhere around him:

> The hurtful penalty is due to crime, but falls upon the sinless head: depraved men rest at ease on thrones aloft and by their unjust lot can spurn beneath their hurtful heel the necks of virtuous men. Beneath obscuring shadows lies bright virtue hid: the just man bears the unjust's infamy. They suffer not for crimes glozed over with their lies. But when their will is to put forth their strength, with triumph they subdue the mightiest kings whom peoples in their thousands fear.[2]

Indeed it seems that God allows the reign of Fortune in the world, a Fortune which is inconstant by its very definition.[3] Following the lead of Augustine, Boethius remarks that without inconstancy Fortune would not be Fortune. Inconstancy is a marked characteristic of the world.

But there is a reason, a purpose in all worldly inconstancy. The reign of Fortune, which is real enough, is not the reign of pure chance. Fortune is the instrument of God which teaches us certain vital truths. The world is full of vanities, honor, wealth, fame; we are consumed by our lusts for worldly things; our passions are, as Spinoza would term them over a thousand years later, the elements of human bondage. We mistake the end of life--to return to God

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[1]Boethius, op. cit., p. 3. [2]Ibid., p. 15.

[3]Ibid., pp. 20-22.

the creator and sustainer of the universe--and Fortune serves to remind us of that end. Fortune teaches us that we must give up the things of the world to be truly happy, and if we are so miguided that we are bound to the things of this world, she will forcibly thrust them out from under us.

What appears to be chance, then, argued Boethius, is not really chance at all. Fortune is a part of Fate or Providence, which uses her to try our mettle and to remind us that the espousal of God requires the contempt of the world. Had he himself followed the simply constituted yet blessed way of life with Dame Philosophy, Boethius would have been spared the trials he now suffered. In October, 524, Fortune dealt her final blow to Boethius; he was executed in his cell. His mediations became a standard text for the Middle Ages.

Written almost a century after The City of God, Boethius' work defined the shape of Fortune for the Christian world. Augustine had suggested that Fortune was perhaps an agent for God. Boethius definitely so established Fortune for the Middle Ages and much of the Renaissance. Fortune is a force controlled by God to try and to teach men. Fortune is a part of the greater order of the universe, a servant, sometimes a part of Providence.

This concept held with little modification throughout the Middle Ages. Writing at the end of the period and summing up the achievement of the medieval world, Dante placed Boethius in the fourth heaven and used his discussion of Fortune, with

a minor modification. In the seventh Canto of the Inferno, the narrator and Virgil are examining the vanity of men who trust their affairs to Fortune, especially in the acquisition of wealth. The narrator asks what the nature of Fortune is, and Virgil replies that Fortune is one of the divine agents of God:

> He whose transcendent wisdom passes all,
> The heavens reacting, gave them ruling powers
> To guide them; so that each part shines to each,
> Their light in equal distribution pour'd.
> By similar appointment he ordain'd,
> Over the world's bright images to rule,
> Superintendence of a guiding hand
> And general minister, which, at due time,
> May change the empty vantages of life
> From race to race, from one to other's blood,
> Beyond prevention of man's wisest care.
> . . . . . .
> Against her nought avails
> Your utmost wisdom. She with foresight plans,
> Judges, and carries on her reign, as theirs
> The other powers divine. Her changes know
> None intermission: by necessity
> She is made swift, so frequent come who claim
> Succession in her favors. This is she,
> So execrated e'en by those whose debt
> To her is rather praise: they wrongfully
> With blame requite her, and with evil word;
> But she is blessed, and for that recks not:
> Amidst the other primal beings glad
> Rolls on her sphere, and in her bliss exults.[1]

At last Fortune has become one with the guiding spirits of the spheres, a glorious agent of a just and all-powerful God. No evil can be associated with the name of Fortune (Boethius said the same), for Fortune is as blessed as any other heavenly creatures. Whatever man may do, whatever may come to him or to his race, he may expect that there is a heavenly affair

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[1]Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, translated by Henry Cary (New York, 1909), Inferno, Canto VII, p. 30.

in which his particular fate plays a small but significant and necessary part. There is no real disorder even under the moon.

The basic concepts of Fortune expressed by these great figures standing at both ends of the Middle Ages are essentially the basic concepts which found further expression in much Renaissance literature. Although Fortune was at times simply a literary convention, Renaissance writers, seriously concerned with the governing powers of the world, were likely to consider it seriously in the philosophical orientation which they all more or less shared. Their speculations on order and disorder, if they could not find a purely philosophical outlet in Neo-Platonism or some other system, as did Edmund Spenser, for example,[1] inevitably included some consideration of Fortune.

The Christian humanists, especially in the North,[2] adopted from Catholic thinkers of the Middle Ages an inherent belief in the order of the world and to some extent the concept of Fortune as a part of the order. They varied the concept only slightly, although the slight changes were undoubtedly significant. Boccaccio, for example, whose collection of "tragedies," De Casibus Virorum Illustriorum, was one of the

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[1]Spenser's essential attitude toward chance may be found in "Two Cantos on Mutability," The Poetic Works of Spenser, edited by J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (London, 1950), pp. 394-406.

[2]For the unique and distinctive qualities of Northern humanism, see Douglas Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism (Toronto, 1939), chap. I.

most widely read and most widely influential books of the early Renaissance, treated Fortune humanistically, in the sense of its being part of the order.[1]

An example more pertinent, however, since it takes us to England proper and to the very century of the Elizabethan playwrights, is the famous Mirror for Magistrates, which added an important development to the traditional concepts of Fortune. The Mirror was by no means the first book of its kind, but it was one of the most important, furnishing a source for many of the Elizabethan plays. Appearing first in 1559, it was intended as an extension of the fifteenth century Fall of Princes by Lydgate; but as the title might suggest, it is something more than a mere collection of medieval "tragedies" of Fortune.

The word Fortune appears on almost every page of the Mirror, but it suggests a very particular kind of Fortune. Fortune is certainly not Aristotle's "uncaused cause," but neither is it precisely the force of change described by Boethius or Dante. Already part of the order, Fortune takes on a new function. To the writers of the Mirror, Fortune is justice, God-given. It has not even the apparent qualities

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[1]"Boccaccio's presupposition or working hypothesis amounts in its simplest terms only to this: All the notable tragedies which a diligent man can collect from literature, tradition, and observation show without exception that the mortal world (as distinct from heaven) is ruled by Fortune, the irrational spirit of chance. The fact that the power of Fortune is really the power of God, when considered rightly . . . does not make Fortune any less irrational. God simply has different methods of procedure in heaven, which is perfect, and on earth, which is imperfect." Farnham, op. cit., p. 78.

of disorder or unpredictable determinism which the medieval writers and even Boccaccio had given it.

The purpose of the book, as Baldwin, the first editor, put it in his dedication,[1] was to supply a mirror in which magistrates (simply men in high political office) might see the fates of men who did not obey sound governing principles, those essential principles of government set down by the humanists. The very titles of the Mirror are demonstrations of the preoccupation with justice, with the conviction that men bring about their own doom by putting themselves in situations where they must be punished by the just hand of God. Fortune has no meaning as chance here; all the irrational elements are gone, although by retaining the image of Fortune the authors make use of a familiar convention:

> In the rufull Register of mischief and mishap
> Baldwin we beseech thee with our names to begin,
> Whom vnfriendly Fortune did trayne into a trap,
> When we thought our state most stable to haue bin,
> So lightly leese they all which all do ween to wyn:
> Learn by vs ye Lawyers and Iudges of the lande
> Vncorrupt and vpright in doome always to stande.[2]

The contradiction here is only apparent. Men do not fall because of Fortune. They fall because they misconstrue the law or because they are devoted to the pursuit of vice or because they rebel against the lawful king or because they break the sacred oaths of office. To offset an overthrow by Fortune--justice here and justice alone--the official need

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[1] The Mirror for Magistrates, edited by Lily B. Campbell (London, 1938), p. 71.

[2] Ibid., p. 73.

only follow virtue and right reason. The "tragedies" in the Mirror are the tragedies of men of free will who create their own misfortunes. The final transformation of Fortune into justice was a logical development of the humanistic concept as it came from the Middle Ages.

Closely connected in the Renaissance mind with the concept of Fortune was the concept of the influence of the stars. Augustine, with his usual thoroughness in abolishing everything not directly providential, denied the influence of the stars, but astrology has apparently always exerted an irresistible fascination on the mass of men. During the medieval period the connection between the stars and Fortune became closer. Men were continually under the "influence of heavenly bodies, which in their eternal round turned up good or bad fortune for mankind--with no more plan than is apparent in the spinning of a roulette wheel."[1]

The Renaissance perceived an identical connection, for the men of this time, in the main no wiser than the men of any other but caught up in an expanding universe, believed in the influence of the stars on man's fate.[2] Astrology was in part sanctioned by religion, for theologians had suggested that man was put under the influence of the stars by the fall,[3]

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[1]Farnham, op. cit., p. 105.

[2]Renaissance attitudes, especially Italian, are summed up with some detail in Don Cameron Allen, The Star-Crossed Renaissance (Durham, 1943).

[3]See E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1944), p. 50.

just as man was also put under the rule of Fortune. Fortune and the stars became almost one.

The principal philosophical emphasis of the Christian humanist--and the greatest writers of the English Renaissance, Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Milton drew from this tradition--was on ethics. The humanist would have little to do with the Protestant groups, which stressed depravity with justification by faith or predestination. The world was essentially ordered, yet man's fate was in his own hands, since he had free will, free reason to choose the proper path--the one that led to God. In such a world of order, Fortune has little place, if considered as an irrational force. The world was under the law of God, the law stated by Aquinas and Hooker, and under the law, Fortune could be only a God-appointed trier of man, as it was for Boethius, a divine instrument as it was for Dante, or justice as it was for the writers of the Mirror. Reason dictates that there can be no real chance, no real disorder, but that relationships are sometimes simply too subtle for our limited understanding. The Renaissance humanistic concept, inherited from the Middle Ages, was much different from the one combatted by Augustine or the one proposed by the naturalistic skeptics. The humanistic concept was perhaps more comforting in that there was no possible injustice, but it was somewhat terrifying also in the immense responsibility it placed on man.

CHAPTER II

NATURALISTIC CONCEPTS OF FORTUNE

Too frequently the Renaissance has been summed up as a single awakening of thought and art and learning, the multiflorous blooming of a single plant with its roots in antiquity. But no time can ever be summed up this way, because the minds of men are infinitely diverse. Italy had its Girolamo Savonarola as well as its Lorenzo the Magnificent, and England its Martin Marprelate as well as its Richard Hooker. The main stream of Renaissance Christian humanistic thought--with its belief in order and free will, with its faith in reason and Christian ethics--was opposed by important tides of counter thought.[1] From the time of the crusades, European life and thought became increasingly secular, and it is therefore not surprising to find in the Renaissance numbers of men who have made a total break with the old tradition, with the old ideals or concepts of order and hierarchy. Those who did not maintain their religious orientation often became naturalists, agnostic, sometimes atheistic, enemies of the Protestants and the Christian humanists alike. Of the devil's party admittedly, their

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[1]The whole picture of counter-humanist thought is surveyed, although with some confusion, in Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renassiance (New York, 1950).

influence was as powerful as that traditionally assigned to their supposed exemplar; for it was, after all, the naturalistic attitude which was to triumph in the Age of Reason.

Naturalism has so many meanings that it may not be defined with an precision except in terms of the period in which it is to be considered and in terms of the individual naturalist. In the case of the Elizabethan period, the whole naturalistic philosophy--fascinatingly repugnant to the Elizabethan mind--was summed up in a single figure who became far more a symbol than a man, Niccolo Machiavelli.[1] It was in the name of Machiavelli, rightly or wrongly, that naturalistic siege engines were thrust forward against the fortresses of humanism.

Naturalism, in terms of Machiavelli's thought and that which he had attributed to him by followers and enemies alike, is a view of the world in which the supernatural is largely ruled out as an active force in the individual life or in history.[2] The universe is one in which, as the modern Existentialists put it, man makes himself without the help of a God. Naturalism may be distinguished from mere materialism, however, in that it is concerned solely with phenomena and not with

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[1]See Wyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare (New York, n. d.); Mario Praz, Machiavelli and the Elizabethans (London, 1928); Roy W. Battenhouse, Marlowe's Tamburlaine: A Study in Renaissance Moral Philosophy (Nashville, 1941), passim.

[2]This is probably the major meaning of the term. See "Naturalism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. VII. The definition varies somewhat in different periods and according to the naturalist.

questions of reality or substance. In essence, naturalism was the inevitable product of a growing tide of secular thought, a complete secularization of life and history.

Machiavelli, for example, in his writings on government (and it is for these that he is most famed) is completely out of the main stream of ethical and idealized political thought. He is a secular political historian. Max Lerner writes of him in this respect:

> The humanists who had written books about princes had written in the idealistic and scholastic medieval tradition; they were ridden by theology and metaphysics. Machiavelli rejected metaphysics, theology, idealism. The whole drift of his work is toward a political realism, unknown to the formal writing of his time.[1]

However shortsightedly Lerner views the work of Erasmus, Castiglione, Sir Thomas More, his essential thesis is correct. Machiavelli distinguished clearly between what men should be and what they in fact are. He refused to find a real divine purpose in the world, an evolutionary movement in history; indeed, history revealed only cycles of human folly and chance. To Machiavelli, as to Nietzsche some four hundred years later, history was "the experimental refutation of the so-called moral order of things."

Yet for all his denial of the supernatural, Machiavelli did write of chance and Fortune. He admitted the existence of chance, but he added considerations which, taken into the

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[1]Max Lerner, introduction to The Prince and The Discourses (New York, 1950), p. xxxi. This is the view also of Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State (New Haven, 1946), pp. 150-152 esp.

literature of the period, tended to produce a new idea of tragedy. Rarely did he write of Fortune seriously in terms of a tool of Providence as it was for the humanists or even as a real supernatural determining force. Fortune was to him, although he allegorized it, an abstract concept, taking in all the unknown, unpredictable factors in a given situation. It is in this sense that he employs the term most frequently.

Fortune, then, does exist in a sense for Machiavelli, but he denies that it is beyond control, that man has no stake in the events around him. The Renaissance saw the rise of the cult of *virtus*,[1] the worship of strength and unscrupulous

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[1] *Virtus*, *virtù*, *virtue*. The Latin form *virtus* is preferable to the Italian *virtù*, although the meaning is the same, with emphasis on manliness, courage, cunning, force, strength, capacity. This is the seventh meaning of *virtue* given by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "The possession or display of manly qualities; manly excellence, manliness, courage, valour." As *virtus* or *virtù*, the word had none of the connotations of *virtue* in the modern sense, however. "It implied great vigor combined with extraordinary ability crowned with extraordinary success," Henry S. Lucas, *The Renaissance and Reformation* (New York, 1934), p. 204. Gabriel Harvey, an Elizabethan who wrote much of *virtù*, remarks on the general characteristics: "Wealth and honor . . . prompt action . . . boldness, eloquence, and winning manners lead to success . . . The power of Gold . . . Be serpent and dove, lamb and wolf (The Lion and the Fox) . . . Lose not time . . . An Iron Body; A Silver Mind; A Golden Fortune," from Marginalia, in *A Portable Elizabethan Reader*, edited by Hiram Haydn (New York, 1946). In this sense of *virtù* or *virtue*, W. T. Jones writes: "Those acts are now regarded as virtuous which enable the prince to accomplish his end--*viz.* the cunning, deceit, unscrupulousness, and ruthlessness which enable him to maintain himself in power," *Masters of Political Thought*, Vol. II, (New York, 1949), p. 42. Originally requiring aristocratic birth, in England it soon became separated from that original qualification, perhaps because of the rising middle class: "It was no longer sufficient to follow in the footsteps of worthy predecessors . . . The new conception . . . looked rather to individual *virtù* than to outward factors," Lewis Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England* (New York, 1902), p. 67. It

power, and Machiavelli gave the worshippers a new Bible in The Prince. The man of virtus combines the qualities of the lion and the fox; he gathers in kingdoms and keeps them by his strength and cunning. Although he is sometimes favored by Fortune, the man of virtus owes more to his ability and his particular quality of being the man suited to the need of the time. As men have intelligence and ability, so they have some control over Fortune. Only the fool who trusts to Fortune is Fortune's slave:

> It is not unknown to me how many have been and are of the opinion that worldly events are so governed by fortune and by God, that men cannot by their prudence change them, and that on the contrary there is no remedy whatever, and for this they may judge it to be useless to toil much about them, but let things be ruled by chance. This opinion has been more held in our day, from the great changes that have been seen, and are daily seen, beyond every human conjecture. When I think about them, at times I am partly inclined to agree with them. Nevertheless, that our free will may not be altogether extinguished, I think that it may be true that fortune is the ruler of half our actions but that she allows the other half or thereabouts to be governed by us. I would compare her to an impetuous river that, when turbulent, inundates the plains, casts down trees and buildings, removes earth from this side and places it on that . . . still when it is quiet, men can make provision against it by dykes and banks, so that when it rises, it will either go into a canal or its rush will not be so wild and dangerous. So it is with fortune, which shows her power where no measures have been taken to resist her, and directs her

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was concerned primarily with strength and less with the other characteristics of the gentleman courtier, the man of virtù admired by the French and the Italians. In England it was connected far more with the name of Machiavelli than with the name of Castiglione. It was in this sense, the Machiavellian sense, that Nietzsche wrote of it: "In the days of the Renaissance, the criminal was a flourishing speciman of humanity and acquired his own virtue for himself, virtue in the sense of the Renaissance, that is to say virtù, free from moralic acid," The Will to Power, 740.

> fury where she knows that no dykes or barriers have been made to hold her.[1]

The remedy for Fortune was not contempt of the world, as it had been for Boethius and the Middle Ages, or ethical governing, as it was to the politically minded humanists. To the naturalist, the chief remedy for Fortune was strength.

Among the naturalistic thinkers, man's control over his Fortune was a fundamental doctrine. In England, following the lead of Machiavelli,[2] Francis Bacon could write of Fortune in 1612 in almost identical terms:

> It cannot be denied, but outward accidents conduce much to fortune; favor, opportunity, death of others, occasion fitting virtue; but chiefly, the mold of a man's fortune is in his own hands: Faber quisque fortunae suae, saith the poet; and the most frequent of external causes is that the folly of one man is the fortune of another. The way of fortune is like the milky way in the sky; which is a meeting or knot of a number of small stars, not seen asunder, but giving light together; so are there a number of little and scarce discerned virtues or rather faculties and customs, that make men fortunate.[3]

The rise and fall of princes is not due to Fortune but rather

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[1]Machiavelli, The Prince, XXV, p. 91.

[2]This is not surprising. Bacon quotes Machiavelli frequently and wrote: "We are much beholden to Machiavel and others, that write what men do and not what they ought to do. For it is not possible to join serpentine wisdom with the columbine innocency, except men know exactly all the conditions of the serpent . . . that is, all forms and natures of evil. For without this, virtue lieth open and unfenced. Nay an honest man can do no good upon those that are wicked to reclaim them, without the help of the knowledge of evil." Of the Advancement of Learning, II, The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, edited by John M. Robertson (London, 1905), p. 140.

[3]Francis Bacon, "Of Fortune," op. cit., p. 784. See also Of the Advancement of Learning, II, p. 155.

to ability or to lack of ability, in part to natures which do not or do not permit one to change with the need of the time. "If one could change one's nature with time and circumstances, fortune would never change."[1] Machiavelli and Bacon both deny that Fortune, if it exists at all, is truly supernatural; both admit that man has contol. Man is able, if he has the strength and ability, to stay the giddy turning of Fortune's wheel. The naturalist made man almost complete master of his own fate.

In The Discourses, so much more thorough and sustained than the shorter Prince, Machiavelli speaks of chance and Fortuneagain, coupling it generally with the concept of control of Fortune by virtus. But he also adds a concept not found in The Prince, a theory of election by Fortune, the doctrine of the fortunati.[2] Certain men, according to this theory, are chosen by Fortune (and one still doubts a supernatural being as definition) for a special task, to fill some need in history, in the course of human events. The man who is of the fortunati combines all the qualities of virtus with election by Fortune:

> It certainly is the course of Fortune, when she wishes to effect some great result, to select for her instrument a man of such spirit and ability that he will recognize the opportunity which is afforded him. And thus, in the same way, when she wishes to effect the

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[1]Machiavelli, The Prince, XXV, p. 93.

[2]Don Cameron Allen suggests that Pontano and Machiavelli were mutually responsible for developing this theory: "Renaissance Remedies for Fortune: Marlowe and the Fortunati," Studies in Philology, XXXVIII (1941), pp. 188-97.

> ruin and destruction of states, she places men at the head who contribute to and hasten such ruin; and if there is anyone powerful enough to resist her, she has him killed or deprives him of all means of doing any good . . . I repeat then, as an incontrovertible truth, that men may second Fortune, but cannot oppose her; they may develop her designs, but cannot defeat them.[1]

Some men, born fortunate, do not find that Fortune's course is a cycle. They know what they must do; like forces of nature they expend their energies to their purpose, and succeed. Fortune elects the strong.

Thus in Machiavelli, whose doctrine presents the naturalistic case for the Elizabethans, Fortune may exist, but it is under the control of the man of virtus, who may or may not be one of the fortunati. Actually there is only a half belief in real chance. Men are in part responsible for their own Fortune, provided they have certain natural gifts. Strangely enough, this view corresponds to the view of the humanists, although it is oriented more to success than to failure and lacks a religious or ethical idealism. In both camps there is a general trend away from a belief in real Fortune. As Cassirer puts it in his study of Renaissance thought:

> Aus der Fortuna mit dem Rad, das dem Menschen ergreift und das ihm mit sich umwaelzt, das ihn bald erhebt, bald in den Abgrund stuerzt, wird die Fortuna mit dem Segel--und nicht nur sie ist es die das Schiff geleitet, sondern der Mensch ist es der am Ruder sitzt.[2]

Indeed, both humanist and naturalist agreed that man was at

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[1]Machiavelli, The Discourses, Bk. II, chap. xxix, p.281.

[2]Ernst Cassirer, Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance (Leipzig, 1927), p. 81.

the rudder, that he controlled his own fate.

By the end of the sixteenth century then, there were at least two main concepts of Fortune. The first was a Christian humanistic concept, developed out of the Middle Ages and scarcely changed, in which Fortune meant justice or an agent of Providence. The image of Fortune and her wheel was taken over by some of the humanists, who insisted that she be understood as a controlled part of a broader world order with hierarchies and a ruling spirit. Princes could not fall simply because of the vagaries of Fortune, for the world was ordered. The naturalists, although they denied any real order, also tended to deny true Fortune, but suggested an unpredictable, man-determined course of events in the world. To various English Renaissance writers, the word Fortune has all of these meanings; yet the more particular meaning which an artist gives it, the responsibility he attaches to it, will sometimes suggest whether an artist was in the mainstream or a counterstream of the complex and sometimes confusing thought of the Renaissance. A belief in Fortune, just as any other belief or lack of belief, tends to reveal a certain intellectual temper.

An author who wrote of Fortune frequently, one of the most complex figures of the Elizabethan period and one who has suffered as much romanticizing and misunderstanding as Shakespeare, was Christopher Marlowe. His use of Fortune in his plays offers a challenging and somewhat puzzling problem. Fortune is one of the key concepts in his plays and his

handling of Fortune suggests, if nothing more, an inscrutable intellectual temper, one of the reasons, perhaps, for his uniqueness in the literature of his age. With only the slightest of biographical information at hand, one can only attempt to fit his concepts into broader patterns and see if they add anything to our present picture of Marlowe's work and thought. Fortune is certainly such a concept.

CHAPTER III

FORTUNE IN TAMBURLAINE

The two parts of Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1587-1588) contain more significant references to Fortune than any of the other plays in the recognized Marlowe canon.[1] Consequently this play provides a convenient place to begin an investigation of the concepts of Fortune in Marlowe's plays. Tamburlaine does not contain Marlowe's final word on the subject; indeed, the opposite would seem to be true, but it does contain an impressive representation of concepts.

Three closely related concepts of Fortune appear from the beginning of the play, all interrelated but fairly distinguishable. These are the concepts of the fortunati, or election by Fortune; Fortune as a force to be controlled or nullified by the exercise of strength or virtus; and Fortune as a traditionally irrational force of chance or hazard, beyond the control of man. These concepts appear not only in connection with the hero, but also in connection with other characters whose careers in subplots help supply relationships for the larger world view.

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[1] Tamburlaine, although in two parts, may be conveniantly considered as a single play. All quotations are from the Works of Christopher Marlowe, edited by C. F. Tucker Brooke (London, 1910).

The concept of the fortunati, as it appears in Machiavelli, suggests that occasionally a man is chosen by some power, called Heaven and Fortune, to fulfill some purpose in the world, sometimes hidden from the doer himself. The man elected by Fortune has certain characteristics.[1] He knows that he is one of the chosen; he acts impetuously and with striking success. His efforts in love, war, and money-making all succeed equally well. He is indeed the child of Fortune.

Tamburlaine is represented in the play as almost typical of the fortunati. He is well aware that he is chosen and believes himself under the physical protection of heaven (not really Providence, but only a force outside himself).[2] To Theridamas he boasts:[3]

> Draw foorth thy sword, thou mighty man at Armes,
> Intending but to rase my charmed skin:
> And Ioue himself will stretch his hand from heauen
> To ward the blow, and shield me safe from harme.
> See how he raines down heaps of gold in showers,
> As if he meant to giue my Souldiers pay,
> And as a sure and grounded argument,
> That I shall be the Monark of the East,
> He sends this Souldans daughter rich and braue,
> To be my queen and portly Emperesse. (373-382)

Led by hints of divine prophecy (49), Tamburlaine has the active protection of heaven. But his charmed skin is only one of his gifts as the elected son of Fortune. He is also

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[1]See Allen, "Renaissance Remedies for Fortune," op. cit., pp. 188-9.

[2]It is doubtful that heaven can be equated with Providence as Battenhouse contends, op. cit., passim. The play is not, in its total effect, a Christian play.

[3]It is assumed that the basic story of each play is known. Numbers after quotes are the numbers of lines.

fortunate in love and in riches. His armies are showered with gold, and he receives an idealized adoration from the incomparably lovely Zenocrate:

> Ah, life and soule, still houer in his Breast,
> And leaue my body sencelesse as the earth.
> Or els vnite you to his life and soule,
> That I may liue and die with Tamburlaine. (1006-9)

These are the gifts of the fortunati, not of the men who are being raised on Fortune's wheel. All things are given to Tamburlaine because he was chosen: "Nature doth striue with Fortune and his stars/ To make him famous in accomplisht woorth." (487-8)

Tamburlaine continually relates his ordained state, as do others. Ortygius gives his approval to the crowning of Cosroe because the latter is adding his force to Tamburlaine's:

> In happy hower we haue set the Crowne
> Vpon your kingly head, that seeks our honor,
> In joining with the man, ordain'd by heauen
> To further euery action to the best. (504-7)

His friends as well as his enemies suggest that he has been elected, and Tamburlaine is by no means shy in claiming his election. To Cosroe, who joins forces with him, relying upon an "assured oracle," Tamburlaine replies:

> And so mistake you not a whit my Lord.
> For fates and Oracles of heauen haue sworne,
> To roialize the deeds of Tamburlaine:
> And make them blest that share in his attempts.
> And doubt you not, but if you fauour me,
> And let my Fortune and my valour sway
> To some direction in your martiall deeds,
> The world will striue with hostes of men at armes
> To swarme vnto the Ensigne I support. (604-12)

There are many points worthy of note in this speech, but again

the main theme is Tamburlaine's election by Fortune, prophesied by Fates and Oracles alike.

As in Machiavelli, however, there is some confusion about the nature of the force which has elected Tamburlaine. Sometimes it is Fortune, sometimes God. But Tamburlaine's God is a rather indefinite deity. He is often called Jove (375), and Tamburlaine's allusions cover much of the Greek pantheon, a tribute more to Marlowe's education than to any consistency in a created character. Other times Marlowe allows his hero to swear by Mohammed, and at the end of the play he burns Mohammed's books. Tamburlaine never mentions Christ or Jehovah, although Christ supposedly helps defeat the unfaithful Sigismund and although Tamburlaine swears he will free the Christian captives of the Turk.[1]

For all the theological confusion, however, Tamburlaine insists that he is the "Scourge of God,"[2] the title usually reserved for the fabulous Attila. At one place he calls himself "the wrathful messenger of mighty Ioue." (2204) When he curses Mohammed, he appeals to a higher force, a single God, obscure enough in definition, whose agent he is:

> In vaine I see men worship Mohamet.[3]
> My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,

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[1]This is perhaps a sop to an audience steeped in Crusade romances.

[2]Battenhouse insists that this makes the play a sort of philosophical morality play, op. cit.

[3]Obviously Marlowe knew only popular conceptions of Mohammedism, supplying the founder with godhead and his religion with a priesthood.

> Slew all his Priests, his kinsmen, and his friends,
> And yet I liue vntoucht by Mohamet:
> There is a God full of reuenging wrath,
> Whose Scourge I am, and him will I obey.
> . . . . . .
> Seeke out another Godhead to adore,
> The God that sits in heauen, if any God,
> For he is God alone, and none but he. (4290-6, 4311-13)

Despite a hint of atheism in the next to last line, one may suppose that this is again Jove the thunderer, for it is to Jove that Tamburlaine calls in his last illness (4453). Tamburlaine tells his sons to become scourges too (2632-3), suggesting that the title is hereditary.

The confusion here is apparent, and the nature of the forces in Tamburlaine presents something of a problem. Tamburlaine suggests at times that he is under the yoke of heaven, a single God; at other times he insists that he is under the sponsorship of Fortune. Certainly Tamburlaine's heaven is as close to Fortune as Machiavelli's and might also be used interchangeably. Some force beyond Tamburlaine has chosen him, elected him to perform great deeds. His characteristics are typically those of the fortunati. Tamburlaine's God is less easily reconciled with concepts of the Christian or Hebrew God than with concepts of Fortune. Fortune, or chance, sometimes has the tendency to assume the form of deity, for many are convinced in all times that it is the real ruler of the world.

The force which chooses Tamburlaine, after all, is a force careless of life and certainly careless of the well reasoned justice which the humanists ascribed to Providence.

Tamburlaine is continually cursed, and sometimes justly, yet he feels certain that he will be vindicated by the amoral force whose instrument he sometimes considers himself:

> I glorie in the curses of my foes,
> Hauing the power from the Emperiall heauen,
> To turne them al vpon their proper heads. (1667-9)

By all the laws of Providence and justice, or even by the order of events ascribed to Fortune, Tamburlaine should fall. Tamburlaine's excessive pride, prominent in the ideal man of Aristotle but the deadliest of the sins to the medieval mind and to the humanist,[1] should alone count for Tamburlaine's downfall. Tamburlaine commits acts of hybris everywhere. But Tamburlaine does not fall, as a typically proud figure in a universe demanding humility should. The dying Cosroe may curse Tamburlaine; Bajazeth may prophesy his downfall, but Fortune favors Tamburlaine. The force which holds Tamburlaine in power is in part irrational, amoral, very close to the typical conceptions of Fortune.

Such an election by an irrational force would in the mind of the naturalist certainly be equivalent to an election by Fortune. Tamburlaine says as much of himself, and others echo the idea. The stars, so closely connected with Fortune in the Renaissance mind, graced his birth and his entire life:

> But as his birth, life, health and maiesty
> Were strangely blest and gouerned by heauen,

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[1] Cf. Doctor Faustus, 723-30. For an explication of the broader meaning of this scene, see my "Marlowe's Faustus and the World as Moral Order" (unpublished B. A. thesis, University of Montana, 1951), pp. 21-22.

So honour heauen till heauen disolued be,
His byrth, his life, his health and maiesty. (4416-19)

Heaven in the context means the stars. The true humanist could not reconcile the civil and personal cruelty of a Tamburlaine with the just and reasonable deity who they believed governed the visible and invisible worlds. The success of Tamburlaine is the success of one of the fortunati, and the concept of elective Fortune is essentially naturalistic.

Closely connected with the idea of the fortunati, however, is the concept of virtus. The naturalist would leave little in the hands of an unknown determining force, still less in a truly supernatural, irrational force. The naturalist was in truth most concerned with the connection between man's fate and man's acts and individual powers; he recognized that there was frequently a correspondence between the so-called gifts of Fortune and a man's abilities and freely willed actions. It is not enough that a man be chosen by some power above him. After all, man himself sits at the rudder of his boat of destiny. To offset any possibility of the change of Fortune, even if one is chosen, one must possess virtus. Few works in Renaissance literature have stressed this quality as a remedy for Fortune as Tamburlaine does. Its hero is almost an ideal figure of the man who possesses virtus.

Tamburlaine admits himself that he is a man of deeds rather than birth and that he owes much of what he is to his own strength and courage and ability. At the beginning of the play, when he is chided by Zenocrate for being a shepherd,

he replies with characteristic confidence in the power of his deeds:

> I am a Lord, for so my deeds shall prooue,
> And yet a shepheard by my Parentage:
> . . . . . .
> Lie here, ye weedes that I disdaine to weare,
> This compleat armor, and this curtle axe
> Are adiuncts more beseeming Tamburlaine. (230-1, 237-9)

Tamburlaine is continually referred to as Fortune's master, and he sometimes calls himself that. "I hold," he says, "the Fates bound fast in yron chaines,/ And with my hand turne Fortunes wheel about." (368-9) As the man of virtus, Tamburlaine is in control of Fortune, not only because he is of the fortunati but also because he is strong, because he does possess virtus.

That Marlowe places a tremendous importance on virtus may be shown by a comparison with the emphasis of Machiavelli, who believed strongly in it. The parallels between certain phases of The Prince and various careers in Tamburlaine have frequently been the subjects of scholarship, and it seems possible that Marlowe may have read this book.[1] One figure in Machiavelli bears a surprising resemblance to Tamburlaine, the Roman Emperor Maximinus. Machiavelli's account of him, in an Elizabethan translation, follows:

> Itt remaynes nowe that we speake so somwhat of the nature & disposition of Maximinus, he lykewise was a verie martiall man. And when the people began to loathe his

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[1] A summary of this scholarship with some new material may be found in Battenhouse, op. cit., pp. 206-16. No investigator, however, so far as I know has pointed out the rather obvious parallel which follows.

> effeminate lyffe, and the soldiers to mislyke the idle mind of Alexander . . . they conspired his deathe and chose this man Emperour in his place, which he did not longe enioye, for two thinges brought him into hatred and contempte; the one because he had been a man of verie base condition, for he had been once a shepheard in Thrasia, which beinge notoriouslie knowen, made him notablie contempned. The other was that he . . . purchased the suspicion of a tyrante, er he was setled in his throne, for he sufferred his generalles and deputies . . . grevouslie to opresse the people with spoyles and extortions. So he became odious to all men, and then some contemninge him for the basenes of his birthe and education, and other hatinge him for the crueltie of his nature and disposition, first Africa, then the Senate and the people of Rome, and lastlie all Italie rose against him. Vpon this his Armye . . . conspired against him and putt him to deathe.[1]

Maximinus, like Tamburlaine, was originally a shepherd who became an emperor. He was a man of tremendous strength and remarkably cruel and warlike nature. But more important than the actual parallel between the figures is the interpretation which Machiavelli makes of Maximinus' career.

A successful prince --and it is the unsuccessful prince who is the subject of the tragedies of Fortune--must have a number of qualities. He must have ability, he must be favored by Fortune, but he must also be of good birth and have control over his cruelty, unless such cruelty is absolutely necessary. To be a prince, for Machiavelli, is not in the grasp of every ambitious peasant, although his own age saw many an obscure adventurer climb to power. The rise from

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[1]Machiavelli, The Prince, an anonymous Elizabethan translation, edited by Hardin Craig (Chapel Hill, 1944), p. 90. A typically dramatic account of the career of Maximinus may be found in Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. I, chap. vii.

"private station" described by Machiavelli as he refers to the great families of Italy, does not mean a rise from the ranks of the common soldiery or the plebs. The passage on Maximinus clearly illustrates this. Next to effemincacy, low birth and unwise cruelty are the two important handicaps to a successful rise to power. Fortune and ability, although they are important, are not enough, for public opinion, ever unstable and often contemptible, must be placated. Neither the citizen nor the soldier will respect the base-born; and both will hate the prince who indulges in prolonged and excessive cruelty.

Marlowe particularly stresses the low origin of his hero (although his origin, not historically accurate, was so given in the sources for the play). In her first speech to the rising warrior, Zenocrate appeals to him as a shepherd and not as a chieftain. Her appeal is scarcely complimentary to the proud Tamburlaine: "Ah, Shepheard, pity my distressed plight/ (If as thou seem'st thou art to meane a man)." (202-3) Tamburlaine quickly answers that deeds, not birth, make the man. In his long and persuasive speech to Theridamas, who is amazed to see such grace and power in a shepherd, Tamburlaine rationalizes his low birth by noting that "Ioue sometime masked in a Shepheards weed." (394) When Cosroe finds that Tamburlaine has turned against him, he rails against the "diuelish shepheard." (812) The flattering supporters of Bajazeth are shocked that the unfortunate king should fight against a man so base in origin as Tamburlaine.

Agydas remarks his low birth when he attempts to dissuade Zenocrate from loving Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine's low birth causes him to be scorned by his enemies before they learn to fear him in defeat.

In the second part of Tamburlaine, the hero's low birth is still emphasized, and references to it occur to embarrass him. Almeda, the traitorous jailor, when his right to kingship is disputed because of low birth, replies: "That's no matter, sir, for being a king, for Tamburlaine came vp of nothing." (3185) Tamburlaine is represented as apparently stung when Orcanes taunts him as "shepheard's issue, base born Tamburlaine," (3578) for he soon replies, emphasizing his origin and declaring that his might of arm should give him victory in spite of it.

Tamburlaine is also represented in the play as a prodigy of cruelty. He follows a recommended Machiavellian course in exterminating the inhabitants of Damascus and Babylon, but it is not the course more seriously recommended.[1] His cruelty extends far beyond mere expediency, however. He tortures the enemy kings whom he captures. He kills his own son while his followers plead for clemency and his conquered enemies remark upon his cruelty. This cruelty does not go unnoticed by those closest to him, either. Zenocrate, whose

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[1]See The Prince, V. Machiavelli suggests that the inhabitants must either be annihilated or surrounded by secure lieutenants. Tamburlaine follows both courses. It may be noted in this instance that although Machiavelli is both ironic and witty, as his more literary productions show, his wit and urbanity are often hidden by his evil reputation.

influence upon him is to temper his brute masculinity with the refining spirituality of beauty, is unable to stay him from slaying her countrymen. She is deeply distressed:

> Ah Tamburlaine wert thou the cause of this,
> That tearm'st Zenocrate thy dearest loue?
> Whose liues were dearer to Zenocrate
> Than her own life, or ought saue thine owne loue.
> (2117-20)

She is appalled at the treatment of the virgins of Damascus and the conquered Bajazeth. She has a fear of Nemesis, and quite properly. But she does not come to hate Tamburlaine; indeed, she prays to both Jove and Mohammed to pardon him. His enemies, on the other hand, find his cruelty an added motive for their expeditions against him.

The important thing about this emphasis is that, although Tamburlaine should fall by all the standards of the traditional Christian humanist view of the world, he should also fall according to the practical political textbook of Machiavelli. Yet he does not fall by either standard.

In spite of his emphasized low birth and his overwhelming cruelty and barbarism, Tamburlaine continues a successful ruler to the end, leaving to his sons a secure kingdom and some worlds yet to conquer. He is never the object of scorn to his own people; he is indeed hated by his enemies, but ineffectually. Those around him fear yet love him. A Theridamas is won by a single golden speech; Zenocrate remains not only loyal, but holds a burning and ideal love for him. His most powerful supporters, contrary to the expectations of Machiavelli in such circumstances, hand him their crowns

in humble obedience. Even Almeda, the single person who actually betrays Tamburlaine, requests permission before he will accept the crown which is the reward of perfidy. Tamburlaine's low birth, although continually referred to, does not make him contemptible. His chief companion, Theridamas, was a companion to other princes; his wife was the daughter of a king. His cruelty does not cut off the love of those around him. It does not cause conspiracies against him; he seems completely to overcome the disadvantages of his low birth. The lesson of Maximinus' fall, given by Machiavelli as a warning to upstart shepherds, is apparently refuted in Marlowe's presentation of Tamburlaine.

The question remains then precisely how Tamburlaine may overcome the qualities which should almost be insuperable obstacles to his success. He is, first of all, one of the fortunati. Fortune and the stars have conspired to make him great. But even more important, as Marlowe indicates by joining to the statements on low birth and cruelty ones on strength and ability, Tamburlaine has virtus.

Just how important this virtus is to Tamburlaine may be deduced from the speeches in praise of it and its compoents as the English virtue, usually from speeches of Tamburlaine himself. At the end of his famous speech on the beauty of Zenocrate and upon the effects of the ideal beauty to be sought by the hero through her, Tamburlaine makes a reference both to his low birth and to the lesson to be drawn from his success, certainly not in this case the lessons taught by

Maximinus' fall:

> But how vnseemly is it for my Sex
> My discipline of armes and Chiualrie,
> My nature and the terrour of my name,
> To harbour thoughts effeminate and faint.
> Saue only that in Beauties iust applause,
> With whose instinct the soule of man is toucht,
> And euery warrior that is rapt with loue,
> Of fame, of valour, and of victory,
> Must needs haue beauty beat on his conceits,
> I thus conceiuing and subduing both
> That which hath stoopt the tempest of the Gods,
> Euen from the fiery spangled vaile of heauen,
> To feele the louely warmth of shepheards flames,
> And marcht in cottages of strowed weeds,
> Shall giue the world to note for all my byrth,
> That Vertue solely is the sum of glorie
> And fashions men with true nobility. (1955-70)

It is the man of virtus[1] who takes Fortune in hand, who overcomes all other difficulties. He is not very dependent upon Fortune's gifts, and he can by action and strength overcome even the handicaps of low birth and a cruel nature. Even under the terms of Machiavelli, however, this is not surprising, for Machiavelli, in one of his most entertaining statements, says of Fortune:

> I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force; and it can be seen that she lets herself be overcome by the bold rather than by those who proceed coldly.[2]

Tamburlaine's concern is always with deeds and worth, not with rights by birth. To Tamburlaine success is the standard of worth. No believer in primogeniture, he tells

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[1]Marlowe's vertue is certainly the same as virtus, closer to the original Latin than from the Italian. See note 1, p. 18, above.

[2]The Prince, XXV, p. 94.

his youngest son:

> If thou wilt loue the warres and follow me,
> Thou shalt be made a King and raigne with me
> Keeping in yron cages Emperours.
> If thou exceed thy elder brothers worth,
> And shine in compleat vertue more than they,
> Thou shalt be king before them, and thy seed
> Shall issue crowned from their mothers wombe. (2612-18)

Virtue--*virtus*, the combination of qualities of courage, of boldness, of ability to seize occasion by the throat and direct the course of events by power--is the sum of glory, the proof of worth. Making kings of his followers, Tamburlaine says:

> Deserue these tytles I endow you with
> By valour and by magnanimity.[1]
> Your byrthes shall be no blemish to your fame,
> For vertue is the found whence honor springs
> And they are worth she inuesteth kings. (1766-70)

Tamburlaine himself is almost the complete man of *virtus*, and he knows its name and its worth. He has lion-like strength and foxlike cunning. He can seize the moment and carries out his plans without concern for ordinary human emotions or passions. He is without pity, if pity will not serve his end. He is like a force of nature, not a mere man; his commands, his actions have a quality in them somewhat superhuman, removed from responsibility and control, like the movements of the planets:

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[1]To the Elizabethan, *magnanimity* had a meaning somewhat like *virtus*: "Magnanimity is a virtue muche commendable, and also expedient to be in a gouernour, and it is, as I haue sayd, a companyon of fortitude. And may in this wise be defined, that it is an excellencie of mynde concernyge thinges of great importance or estimation . . . I will aduenture to put for Magnanimity, a worde more familiar, callynge it good courage, which, hauynge respect to the sayd definition, shall not seem moche inconuenient." Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governor* (London, n.d.), p. 239.

> I will not spare these proud Egyptians,
> Nor change my Martiall obseruations,
> For all the wealth of Gehons golden waues,
> Or for the loue of Venus, would she leaue
> The angrie God of Armes, and lie with me.
> They haue refusde the offer of their liues,
> And know my customes are as preemptory
> As wrathfull Planets, death, or destinie. (1902-9)

No crime can bring about the turning of Fortune's wheel on Tamburlaine. He himself stays it from turning; he is like destiny itself, holding even the fates fast bound in iron chains.

Tamburlaine, as Machiavelli would probably suggest, does not rely much upon his Fortune. He delivers an expert treatise on fortifications and seiges (3245-83), in which he gives credit only to skill and bravery. When one of his sons is overeager to pursue battle, Tamburlaine draws him up shortly:

> No, no, Amyras, tempt not Fortune so,
> Cherish thy valour stil with fresh supplies:
> And glut it not with stale and daunted foes. (3760-2)

He controls Fortune by strength and intelligence. The prophecies of his enemies never come to pass because Tamburlaine is strong, a man of virtus as well as one of the fortunati:

> We shall not need to nourish any doubt,
> But that proud Fortune, who hath followed long
> The martiall sword of mighty Tamburlaine,
> Will now retaine her olde inconstancie,
> And raise our honors to as high a pitch. (3137-40)

But the wheel does not turn with Tamburlaine; he "treadeth fortune underneath his feet." (3463) He is the man of virtus, a superman beyond good and evil, justice and Fortune alike, the man of strength and undaunted courage so disliked and yet

so covertly admired by the Elizabethans, who saw their old men of *virtus* defeat the Armada in the very year which saw *Tamburlaine* on the stage.

The presentation of the concepts of *virtus* as a remedy of the strong man against the turning of Fortune's wheel and the concept of the *fortunati* does not complete the use or discussion of Fortune in *Tamburlaine*. Besides the hero of the play, there are several minor characters whose careers provide convenient commentaries on the power of Fortune.

One of the careers so outlined is that of Cosroe, the usurper of the Persian throne. Menaphon, an advisor, says that Fortune has created Cosroe's opportunity:

> This should intreat your highnesse to reioice,
> Since Fortune giues you opportunity,
> To gain the tytle of a Conqueror,
> By curing of this maimed Emperie. (131-4)

It seems possible to take this statement at its face value. Cosroe seems to represent a man who rises by Fortune alone and one who consequently finds his place precarious.[1] Tamburlaine gives credit to his own ability, while his enemies give Fortune the credit for his success. Cosroe seems to represent a man under traditional Fortune, the irrational force that lifts men up and then casts them down.

Cosroe has, after all, no great ability; he makes the fatal error of choosing an ally stronger than himself and so falls, the foolish victim of Fortune and his own error; his

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[1]See *The Prince*, VII.

lament is the typical lament of one thrown down by the fickle hand of Fortune:

> Trecherous and false Theridamas
> Euen at the morning of my happy state,
> Scarce being seated in my royall throne,
> To worke my downfall and vntimely end.
> An vncouth paine torments my grieued soule,
> And death arrests the organs of my voice.(854-94)

Cosroe, who puts his trust in Tamburlaine's Fortune to aid his own, sums up his deficiency. He himself has only risen on the crest of a temporary wave; he is soon to be thrown down again. Unlike Tamburlaine, he is not in control; he has neither strength nor ability to supplement his Fortune. He offers then not a traditional Christian humanist rise and fall, but a naturalistic one which accepts Fortune as a powerful influence only when it is not controlled by virtus.

Tamburlaine recognizes that Fortune is important, but he always adds virtus: "Let my Fortunes and my valour sway." (609) Bajazeth too is a man of courage and ability, but he lacks an essential quality. His Fortune is weak. Tamburlaine says:

> Alas (poore Turke) his fortune is to weake,
> T'encounter with the strength of Tamburlaine.
> View well my Camp, and speake indifferently,
> Doo not my captains and my souldiers looke
> As if they meant to conquer Affrica? (1104-8)

One should note that Tamburlaine's Fortune is not mentioned here, but emphasis is put on force of arms. Bajazeth, when he loses the battle, says that he does so only by the "fortune of this damned folle." (1311) Cosroe has Fortune without strength; Bajazeth has strength without Fortune; Tamburlaine

has all qualities and carries all before him.

Not only does Bajazeth believe that Tamburlaine's Fortune is greater than his own, but he feels that it is greater than the eternal law of justice which the humanist would also insist rules the world. And Bajazeth is correct. Fortune made Tamburlaine's sword, as it made Prince Hal's, and it made the sword invincible:

> Ah faire Zabina, we may curse his power,
> The heauens may frowne, the earth for anger quake,
> But such a Star hath influence in his sword
> As rules the Skies and countermandes the Gods,
> More than Cymerian Stix of Destinie. (2011-16)

Tamburlaine has Fortune as well as virtus, and his virtus may countermand the usual turning of Fortune. Zabina doubts all order, even the usual order of Fortune:

> Then is there left no Mohamet, no God,
> No feend, no Fortune, nor no hope of end
> To our infamous monstrous slaueries? (2030-32)

Tamburlaine, with his combination of Fortune and virtus, can overcome the supposed order of the world as well as weaker men.

Another fall of some importance in the play is the death of Sigismund. Sigismund has broken his truce with the infidel (a thing Tamburlaine does often), although he has sworn on the name of Christ. He is defeated by Orcanes, and he considers his defeat a just punishment:

> Discomfited is all the Christian hoste,
> And God hath thundered vengeance from on high,
> For my accurst and hateful periurie.
> O iust and dreadful punisher of sinne,
> Let the dishonor of the paines I feele,
> In this my mortall well deserued wound,
> End all my penance in my sodaine death (2922-8)

Orcanes is convinced in part that the hand of God has helped him, and he promises tribute to Christ in the future. His more naturalistic follower, Gazelles, however, suggests that only Fortune was responsible after all: "Tis but the fortune of the wars by Lord,/ Whose power is often proou'd a myracle." (2955) Sigismund is probably supposed to be the man thrown down by Fortune of war because of an evil deed, just as men were always thrown down in the Mirror for Magistrates. It is not that Christ now favors the one who prays to him. Gazelles is partly correct; all Orcanes' prayers cannot save him from Tamburlaine. Sigismund commits a crime and his Fortune changes, as it should, according to the traditional belief in justice. This is a far different case from the fall of either Bajazeth or Cosroe. It is, like Sigismund himself, in the Christian tradition.

Tamburlaine's own Fortune is, of course, great. It is considered by at least one of the other characters as greater than his strength (4375). Tamburlaine is the chosen of Fortune; he has virtus, a quality which makes him succeed in spite of low birth, in spite of the traditional demands of justice and Fortune. Both the naturalistic and the Christian concepts appear in the play. It is perhaps better, however, to defer an interpretation until the other plays dealing with Fortune have been examined.

CHAPTER IV

FORTUNE IN EDWARD II

Edward II is by far the most regular and conventional--and perhaps the least interesting--of Marlowe's plays. Far less lyrical than either Tamburlaine or Doctor Faustus, far more restrained in technique and form, the play is so unlike the better known plays of Marlowe that at least one writer has suggested that Edward is the work of Marlowe as an apprentice playwright, or perhaps the "master-piece" of the journeyman soon to set up shop as one of the greatest dramatists of his age.[1] Certainly the play has occasioned less commentary than the other plays; like Hero and Leander, it invites approval for its regularity and maturity, but it lacks the Muse of fire which ascends the very heaven of invention in the other, less perfect plays. The problem here, of course, is not the merit of the play, but the political and philosophical doctrines expressed in the play, for in the study of Fortune politics and moral philosophy are never far apart.

Edward is the study of a weak king; the story in broad outline follows the account of Holinshed[2] with slight

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[1]J. M. Robinson, Marlowe: A Conspectus (London, 1931).

[2]See Raphaell Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland (London, 1807), Vol. III.

elaboration. Characteristically, Holinshed says little about Fortune; he is undoubtedly in the tradition of the Christian humanists. History reveals justice and order; there is order and disorder, but disorder brings with it its own equilibrating power. It is with an ideal of order that Holinshed portrays his remarkably long series of kings and events.

Edward is concerned with several careers. It portrays the defection and death of Gaveston, corrupter of king Edward; it portrays the life of the unfortunate and weak king himself; and it portrays the fate of Mortimer the rebel. In the career of each of these characters there is a definite climax or turning point, and these may be considered against the traditional turning point in terms of Fortune. Like Tamburlaine, Edward is exceptionally rich in sub-plot and each of these provides another piece in the total world picture presented by the play.

Gaveston is, of course, the principal villain of the play, although he is not, as in two of Marlowe's plays, the hero as well. He insults the nobility (Marlowe would seem less a supporter of absolute royalty than Shakespeare); he corrupts the already weak Edward and comes between the king and the queen (an invention of Marlowe). It is true that he is riding Fortune's wheel; Edward commands him to stay away from England "til fortune call thee home." (423) But Gaveston is more the Machiavellian figure than a hero of Fortune. He gains his ends by policy and deceit, characteristics of the Machiavellian villain. To gain power over the king, he plots

the king's corruption in terms that spelled horror to the Puritan:

> I must haue wanton Poets, pleasant wits,
> Musitians, that with touching of a string
> May draw the pliant king which way I please:
> Musicke and poetrie is his delight,
> Therefore ile haue Italian maskes by night,
> Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing showes,
> And in the day when he shall walke abroad,
> Like Syluan Nimphes my pages shall be clad,
> My men like Satyres grazing on the lawnes
> Shall with their goate feete daunce an antick hay. (52-60)

With consummate Italian skill he tends to draw the English king into sinks of physical pleasure and degradation--especially homosexuality[1]--scarcely mentioned by other Elizabethan playwrights. He leads the realm into danger of ruin, both politically and financially. Because of Gaveston, the treasury is empty and the Scots in the North are laying waste the land:

> The idle triumphes, maskes, lasciuious showes,
> And prodigall gifts bestowed on Gaueston,
> Haue drawne thy treasure drie, and made thee weake,
> . . . . . .
> The Northern borders, seeing the houses burnt,
> Their wives and children slain, run vp and downe,
> Cursing the name of thee and Gaueston. (959-62, 981-3)

When Gaveston is finally killed, he is killed for the benefit of the entire country. Warwick, who killed him without authority, states that it is "my countries cause I follow." This corresponds almost exactly to the statement of Holinshed on the fall of Gaveston:

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[1]Then, as now, spoken of in whispers, homosexuality was not unknown by the Elizabethans. Perhaps reintroduced into Europe by the Crusades, it is mentioned in the Penitentials. Marlowe writes of it in other places: Dido, 1-49, Hero and Leander, Second Sestiad, 155-220. For a neo-Platonic defense of homosexuality, see the glose to "January" in The Shepherdes Calender, Spenser, Works, pp. 422-3.

> But lo the vice of ambition, accompanied with a rable of other outrages, euen a reprochfull end, with an euerlasting marke of infamie, which he pulled by violent menes on himself with the cords of his owne lewdness, and could not escape this fall.[1]

Gaveston's fall is clearly the work of justice. Fortune is neither denoted nor implied here. He followed the usual course of Machiavellian villainy and failed.[2] He tried to gain illegal power by cunning, virtus perhaps, by the methods outlined by the young Spenser:

> Then Balduck, you must cast the scholler off,
> And learn to court it like a Gentleman,
> Tis not a black coate and little band,
> A veluet cap'de cloake, fac'st before with Serge,
> And smelling to a Nosegay all the day,
> Or holding of a napkin in your hand,
> And saying a long grace at a tables end,
> Or making lowe legs to a noble man,
> Or looking downward, with your eyelids close,
> And saying, trulie, ant may please your honor,
> Can get you favour with great men.
> You must be proud, bold, resolute,
> And now and then, stab as occasion serves.(751-63)

Certainly the fall of Gaveston was the fall occasioned by misdeeds. Under the traditional humanistic ideals of the world as order, the fall of Gaveston was inevitable. As Holinshed points out, he pulled down his fate upon himself by violent means. The death of Gaveston is a classic case of poetic (although the humanist considered it factual) justice.

The fall of Edward is also a case of the triumph of justice, the essential justice which overthrew the unjust of the unfortunate rulers in the Mirror for Magistrates. In the

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[1]Holinshed, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 522.

[2]This is, of course, the popular, Gentillet-inspired view of Machiavelli.

of a king, Marlowe had ample opportunity and precedent for railing speeches against Fortune, but he does not supply them. It is justice that bears down on Edward at the last. He has been the cause of his country's misfortune; his country may justly rise against him.[1] Under the evil influence of Gaveston, the weak Edward has committed crimes against his people and his family and deserves to be punished. The queen, in welcoming the foreing troops which will defeat her husband remarks:

> Now lords, our louing friends and countrimen,
> Welcome to England all with prosperous windes,
> Our kindest friends in Belgia haue we left,
> To cope with friends at home; a heauie case,
> When force to force is knit and sword and gleaue
> In ciuell broiles makes kin and country men
> Slaughter themselves in others and their sides
> With their owne weapons gorde, but whats the helpe?
> Misgouerned kings are the cause of all this wrack,
> And Edward, thou are one among them all,
> Whose loosnes hath betrayed thy land to spoyle
> And made the channels ouerflow with blood. (1748-59)

Only when Edward has finally died by the queen, a little dissatisfied with what she has done and with her bargain with Mortimer, "rue my lords ill fortune, but alas/ Care of my countrie cald me to this warre." (1853)

Edward himself, fallen from high estate like the typical victim of Fortune's wheel, says little of Fortune. Yet his consolation from his troubles is the consolation advocated by the followers of Boethius; it is the consolation of philosophy and meditation. To the abbot who shelters him

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[1]This right was fairly common in feudal theory. The classic statement is found in John of Salisbury's book on government, Polycraticus (1159).

he says:

> Father, thy face should harbor no deceit,
> O hadst thou euer beene a king, thy hart
> Pierced deeply with the sense of my distresse,
> Could not but take compassion of my state.
> Stately and proud, in riches and in traine,
> Whilom I was powerfull and full of pompe,
> But what is he, whome rule and emperie
> Hath not in life or death made miserable?
> Come Spencer, come Baldocke, come sit downe by me,
> Make triall now of that philosophie,
> That in our famous nurseries of artes
> Thou suckedst from Plato and from Aristotle.
> Father, this life contemplatiue is heauen,
> O that I might this life in quiet lead,
> But we alas are chaste, and you my friends
> Your liues and my dishonor they pursue. (1875-90)

Edward recognizes the vicissitude of high place, another guise of Fortune.

Leicester, commenting on the king immediately after this plaint for the life contemplative, gives a Latin proverb descriptive of the turn of Fortune's wheel: "Too true it is, quem dies vidit veniens superbum,/ Hunc dies vidit fugiens iacentem." (1920-21) And Edward too curses the turn of his stars:

> O day! the last of all my blisses on earth,
> Center of all misfortune, O my starres!
> Why do you lowre vnkindly on a king? (1928-30)

But Edward has become a philosopher in his last days. He admits that the stars have nothing to do with his death and loss of power: "The gentle heauens have not to do with this." All men live to die, he tells Spenser, and rise to fall. The real reason for this overthrow was his lack of moral character, his neglect of the duties of kingship. He is overthrown by justice, although it may be in the guise of Fortune. Shaken

from the world of glory and fame and taught contempt of the world by his misfortune, Edward is a victim of Fortune as justice, the stern teacher described by Boethius.

Mortimer alone of the three figures whose fates are sealed in the play, is mentioned in connection with Fortune. At the beginning of his rebellion, he announces that his hopes are higher than his Fortune seems to be: "Mortimer's hope surmounts his fortune farre." (1569) He is later described as turning Fortune's wheel, but he does not really control it. He is not a Tamburlaine. He brags to his friends, but he is really tied to the wheel: "As thou intendest to rise by Mortimer/ Who now makes Fortunes wheele turne as he please." (2095)

But Mortimer realizes that his fate is to fall, because he is the typical man raised by the turn of Fortune's wheel. He talks continually of up and down, clear references to the traditional motion of Fortune. If he does not act on the instant, he recognizes that he will fail; his hold is indeed precarious: "The king must die or Mortimer does downe." (2334) At the coronation scene, he brags in Latin that he is above those whom Fortune is able to kill: "Maior sum quam cui possit fortuna noccere." (2400) But his superiority is to be short-lived; he feels he is at the summit when he has begun his downward swing. At the end of Mortimer's "tragedy," we have his own statement, one strikingly typical:

> Base fortune, now I see, that in thy wheele
> There is a point to which when men aspire,
> They tumble headlong downe: that point I touchte,

> And seeing there was no place to mount vp higher,
> Why should I greeue at my declining fall?
> Farewell faire queen, weepe not for Mortimer,
> That scornes the world, and as a traueller,
> Goes to discouer countries yet vnknowne. (2627-34)

This is not very high poetry for Marlowe, yet it foreshadows the famous lines on the "undiscovered country" in Hamlet. And it explains very well the case of Mortimer, the man who most conventionally of all Marlowe's characters takes a tragic ride on the wheel of Fortune. As a regicide, he must surely die, although the king too had to die. Mortimer's problem is something like the problem of Orestes; he is damned for doing what he must do. But it is not the Furies who hunt down Mortimer. Justice may take him at last, but she does so through the instrumentality of Fortune.

Of the three figures, Gaveston, Edward, and Mortimer, only the latter is explicitly the victim of Fortune. Yet in each case there is a falling from high place characteristic of Fortune's victims. In each case some crime, some acts "unnatural" bring about justice and usually in the form of death. They are punished by a turning of affairs, by fall from high station occasioned by crime. The play is far removed philosophically from the play about Tamburlaine, whose crimes were far more serious than any in this play, yet who went unpunished to his grave, carried away at last only by the necessity which takes all men, confident that he was being raised to a place of honor superior to earth (Tamburlaine, 4514). No such comfort lifts the minds of Gaveston or Edward or Mortimer. The play is equally far from Faustus, although there

are similarities. Marlowe's plays are truly capacious and ranging in their ideas, values, and concepts.

CHAPTER V

THE OTHER PLAYS: CONCLUSION

It remains to discuss briefly Marlowe's other known dramas--Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta, The Massacre at Paris, and Dido. None of these plays is particularly concerned with the problem of Fortune, but the very absence of such problems is significant. It must be borne in mind also that these plays are known to us only in far more corrupted versions than most plays of the period. Again, of all the plays, Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, and Edward II are the only plays in which one may find a consistent world view, a consistent philosophical atmosphere, in so far as such intangibles exist in a play. The views in each of the plays may not be consistent with those in the others, but within the play they are consistent. It is very dangerous to assume any one of these to be the author's, but the pattern of ideas in the play may warrant conjecture.

Doctor Faustus, perhaps richer and even more complex intellectually than Tamburlaine[1] denies in its fundamental plan the existence of any force even comparable to Fortune.

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[1]For an interpretation of the play with respect to this issue, see my "Marlowe's Faustus and the World as Moral Order" (unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Montana State University, 1951).

The word is rarely used in the play, the most notable examples being found at the very beginning and at the very end of the play (8, 1483). Faustus is so strongly oriented in the framework of the strictest Christian humanist world of order, that even the mention of Fortune as justice would seem an inconsistency in its philosophical suppositions. The world of Doctor Faustus is a world governed by the just ruler of an ordered universe in which each creature has a place in a preordained hierarchy. Every conclusion in the play indicates the nature of the world to be one of inescapable order; and the man who rebels against this order or puts himself, as Faustus did, outside it, is subject to an infinite degeneration because of his created nature, and finally to an infinite punishment by an active God. But there is no use of Fortune. There is in the play no hint of naturalism, no belief in irrational or random forces in the universe beyond man himself with his free will. Justice appears in its own name, as the stricter humanist mind--the mind of a Hooker--would demand. There is no disguising of the hand of God within the mailed glove of Fortune, as in the Mirror. This is a humanistic play with the basic tenets of humanism exploited with extreme literalness. Faustus cannot be the victim of Fortune. He commits his crime and is punished directly for it. Having climbed out of the chain of being, he is at the end cast into hell eternally, a fate never even suggested for any other of Marlowe's none too ethical heroes.

Certainly the other plays do not portray such an

orderly world, however, and *Faustus* remains a rather magnificent anomaly, a singularly orthodox statement cast in an extremely unorthodox form. It is almost the only play of its kind, philosophically and formally, and in its somewhat corrupted and truncated way, it is sometimes more impressive in its total picture than either the sprawling wastelands of *Tamburlaine* or the nightmare alleyways of the Machiavellian tragedies.

Of the two Machiavellian tragedies,[1] *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*, certainly the former with its extravagant and incredibly drawn figures and its remarkable poetry, is the most important and most intriguing to the modern mind.[2] As in *Faustus*, there is almost no mention of Fortune, although for a different reason, certainly. This is to be a play of "policy," the cunning and amoral practices traditionally ascribed to the Machiavellian villain in his quest for power:[3]

> Albeit the world thinke Machiauell is dead
> Yet is his soule but flowne beyond the Alpes,
> And now the Guize is dead, is come from *France*
> To view this land and frolike with his friends.
> . . . . . .

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[1]As a genre, "Machiavellian tragedy" might well be questioned, but it is a handy descriptive term. See Brooke, *Works of Marlowe*, pp. 232-233.

[2]For example, T. S. Eliot describes the play as a "farce," "Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe," *The Sacred Wood* (London, 1932).

[3]"Policy" is a word frequently used to describe any unethical practice in statecraft. One may compare Milton, *Paradise Regained*, III, 391, for a similar use. It is significant that it is used by the forces of evil.

I count Religion by a childish Toy,
And hold there is no sin but Ignorance.
Birds of the Aire will tell of murders past;
I am ashamed to heare such fooleries;
Many will talke of Title to a Crowne,
What right had Caesar to the Empire?
Might first made kings, and Lawes were then most sure
When like the Dracos they were writ in blood. (1-4, 14-21)

Barabas is a Machiavellian villain first and a Jew second, and the latter consideration, although important, is not an issue affecting the issues here.

As a Machiavellian villain, Barabas is endowed with almost superhuman powers. He has made a tremendous fortune by his skill. He is learned in the sciences, particularly chemistry; he is even a musician on occasion. He has studied and practiced almost as many professions as Doctor Faustus, all, of course, with the intention of doing evil. As a poisoner and cunning villain, he is an excellent Machiavellian--in a popular sense.

But coupled with his ability is his sense of choosing the proper time, the occasion. To be able to take advantage of occasion is one of the ways in which men control Fortune, according to Machiavelli himself. Barabas speaks of this again when he has become governor of Malta but feels that the office is too dangerous. Proposing a strategem to save himself, yet retain power, he speaks of seizing occasion:

No, Barabas, this must be look'd into,
And since by wrong thou got'st Authority,
Maintain it brauely by firme policy,
At least vnprofitably lose it not:
For he that liueth in Authority,
And neither gets him friends, nor fils his bags,
Liues like the Asse that Aesope speaketh of,
That labours with a load of bread and wine,

> And leaues it off to snap on Thistle tops:
> But Barabas will be more circumspect.
> Begin betimes, Occasion's bald behind,
> Slip not thine opportunity, for fear too late
> Thou seek'st for much, but cannot compasse it. (2135-47)

This passage, which sums up the entire problem of the play, Barabas' unscrupulous thirst for power and wealth, contains the essential Machiavellian philosophy of "policy." The reference to "occasion's bald behind" clearly indicates the relation with Fortune. Frequently the figure of Fortune was represented pictorially in the Middle Ages with a forelock and the back of the head bald.[1] Fortune plays a part, in that by seizing occasion, Barabas controls it as Tamburlaine does.

The fall of Barabas, however, is not, according to the play, to be interpreted as a fall by Fortune, although his rise utilized a kind of Machiavellian seizing of Fortune. Fortune, in the Machiavellian sense here, has favored him because he was able to take advantage of events. But his fall is due to supernatural forces removed from any Machiavellian doctrine. The end of the play is almost completely humanistic, and it reflects, as does Faustus, the moral character of the universe. Although the hero is a Machiavellian, he is struck down in the end by the forces of justice. After the disorder, and it is here again that Marlowe must remind us of Shakespeare, order is again restored with the death of the

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[1]Patch, op. cit., p. 45. One should compare with Milton, Paradise Regained, Bk. III, 172-3: "Zeal and duty are not slow/ But on occasion's forelock watchful wait." The figure does not seem common in the Elizabethan writers.

figure who created the disorder. The governor, restored to his rightful place says: "So march away, and let due praise be giuen/ Neither to Fate nor Fortune, but to Heauen." (2409-10) Barabas acts according to the popular conception of the naturalistic, Machiavellian standards of life, and he is thrust into the cauldron by the hand of God restoring order. The world of The Jew of Malta and of Faustus are almost the same, worlds of order, not worlds of disorder. According to the final couplet, Fortune has no place in Barabas' downfall, however much she might have had in his success. Providence is not equated with Fortune, but prevails in the name of heaven.

The same general view of the world appears in the second Machiavellian tragedy, The Massacre at Paris. Although there are images in the play that suggest Fortune, the concept receives no explicit statement. The Guise, a Machiavellian villain working through dire "policy," speaks of what he is doing in terms of ascending, which bears some suggestion of the ascent on Fortune's wheel. He uses, however, the example of ambitious Icarus:

> Set me to scale the high Piramides,
> And thereon set the Diadem of Fraunce,
> Ile either rend it with my nayles to naught,
> Or mount the top with my aspiring wings,
> Although my downfall be the deepest hell. (100-104)

The Guise is the victim of his own ambition, his own fateful pride. Masked by his religious cause, he finds little for him in a common good "that hanges for euery peasant to atchiue." (98) In the end he is rightfully murdered, his star, closely

connected with Fortune, having set:

> Now fals the star whose influence gouernes France,
> Whose light was deadly to the Protestants:
> Now must he fall and perish in his height. (951-3)

But in the end, the Catholic,[1] Machiavellian characters all perish, the wicked are thoroughly overthrown, and order is traditionally restored with a death march. The Massacre at Paris, like The Jew of Malta, is Machiavellian only in the sense that its hero follows a path popularly ascribed to the followers of Machiavellian principles. Justice, not Fortune, triumphs in the play, a heavy-handed and Protestant justice.

The last play to be considered is The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage, not entirely Marlowe's. An early play, Dido was probably written by Marlowe and Thomas Nashe while they were yet at Cambridge.[2] It is fluent and scarcely academic, although it is like an exercise, being largely a translation of parts of Virgil's Aeneid. Unlike Faustus or Tamburlaine, or even the Machiavellian tragedies, Dido has in it little of the sense of broader issues or order to be found in the other plays.

Certainly Dido contains many references to Fortune. Venus tells Aeneas that Fortune has favored him in sending him to the shores of Carthage (230). Aeneas complains about

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[1]Because of the plots on Elizabeth's life, Machiavellianism was closely connected with Catholicism in the Elizabethan mind. Cf. The Jew of Malta, 10-13.

[2]For a discussion on authorship, see Brooke, Works of Marlowe, pp. 388-9.

his Fortune being somewhat less than his birth would properly warrant, and he is reassured by Didothat this is not so:

> Aen. This is no seate for one thats comfortles,
> May it please your grace to let Aeneas waite:
> For though my birth be great, my fortunes meane,
> Too meane to be companion to a Queene.
>
> Dido. Thy fortune may be greater than thy birth,
> Sit down Aeneas, sit in Didos place. (381-86)

They then drink to Fortune and the propitious arrangement of the stars.

Inthetale of the Trojan war, told so vigorously by Aeneas, Priam complains of himself as a victim of Fortune. He was once "Lord of my fortune but my fortunes turned." (530) This is a traditional explanation of the fall of a king and the destruction of his rather extensive lineage. But the horrid details of the fall of Troy are the actions of men, not of supernatural irrational forces. There is little sense of justice either.

Aeneas himself is not portrayed, as Tamburlaine was, as the child of Fortune, but of the Gods who have chosen him to found a new nation, although he is pursued by the Fates as well.[1] By following the order of the Gods he succeeds, but his success is not represented as due particularly to either his own efforts or his Fortune. He does what he does because he must, because he is favored, being the son of Venus. He is the tool of the gods, but these gods are not the same as Christian Providence or Machiavellian Fortuna.

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[1]Cf. the famous opening lines of the Aeneid.

In Tamburlaine alone, of all the plays of Marlowe in the known canon, are the naturalistic concepts of Fortune most prominent. The career of Tamburlaine is the career of one of the fortunati, a man chosen by an irrational force to be senselessly favored regardless of his actions. The career of Tamburlaine is also the career of the man of virtus, that ineffable combination of extraordinary abilities and powers crowned with a penchant for success. He combines the cunning of the fox with the ferocity of the lion. He overcomes even the outstanding disadvantages of low birth and a cruel nature because he is chosen and even more perhaps because he has extraordinary ability and strength. Fortune and the conjunctions of the stars favor him in all ways. He receives all the gifts of Fortune--success in politics, finance, and love.

In the careers of the minor figures of the play, one finds slightly different concepts. Bajazeth falls simply because his fortune is weak compared to the overwhelming combination of Fortune and virtus found in Tamburlaine. Cosroe is the victim of his own folly, choosing an ally stronger than himself, when he had only Fortune to back him up. The Christian Sigismund seems to fall by the hand of God because he has broken his oaths, but the issue is left doubtful. Orcanes, in spite of prayers, goes down before Tamburlaine.

In short, Tamburlaine is written almost entirely in terms of a naturalistic, Machiavellian view of the world in which there is Fortune, but Fortune not so much as a true

supernatural force as a combination of natural vigor with the need of the time. There is little sense of the world as order, no sense of an active, just Divinity in the world. Order is not restored at the end of Tamburlaine: the world is a wasteland, an indifferent world ruled by the strongest wills, the wills of such magnificent and at the same time monstrous prodigies as Tamburlaine. As a character, and he is a gigantic monomaniac, he fits perfectly into the exotic, pagan world of heroic poetry where Marlowe put him. The play is, as Willard Farnham points out, "a medieval tragedy reversed, a rebellious violation of all that De Casibus tragedy had set out to convey."[1] The hero is almost a force of nature, uncontrolled, irrational, the child of Fortune and success due to strength. Tamburlaine presents a vision of unlimited power to which all men aspire by their very natures. Tamburlaine tells us:

> Nature that fram'd vs of four Elements,
> Warring within our breast for regiment,
> Doth teach vs all to haue aspyring minds:
> Our soules, whose faculties can comprehend
> The wondrous Architecture of the world:
> And measure euery wandring plannets course,
> Still climing after knowledge infinite,
> And alwaies moouing as the restles Spheares,
> Wil vs to weare ourselues and neuer rest,
> Vntill we reach the ripest fruit of all,
> That perfect bliss and sole felicitie,
> The sweet fruition of an earthly crowne. (869-880)

The last line is perhaps an anticlimax to the romantic lovers of Marlowe's idealism, but it is consistent with the secular, earthly emphasis on power and success, on worldly pride, on

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[1]Farnham, op. cit., p. 370.

contempt of the world turned about and become the contempt of heaven. The play is truly naturalistic in its use of Fortune; it denies justice, the interference in the affairs of men by a just and rational God. There is in Tamburlaine no sense of Fortune in a humanistic sense. Fortune as it exists at all is a semi-irrational force under the control of man, perhaps only an explicable combination of circumstances and character.

Edward II is much more traditional in its ideas. Gaveston, Edward, and Mortimer receive just punishment, however much or little they prate of Fortune. None of them commits a crime comparable to the least of Tamburlaine's, yet this hero prospers while each of the three characters in Edward comes to an appointed end. Gaveston was a vicious seducer of the King; Edward was inattentive to the best interests of the state; and Mortimer overthrew a king, although someone had to overthrow him, if justice were to prevail. God threw his tool into the fire here, and this apparently irrational note in the play is covered elaborately with passages on the turn of Fortune's wheel. The tragedy of Edward might have come from the Mirror for Magistrates, where the wicked are always punished and discord is resolved into harmony, minor into major as at the end of a Bach prelude. This play draws most heavily upon the long tradition of Fortune which comes from Augustine and Boethius and Dante, Fortune as an instrument of divine will, Fortune as justice. Edward represents a stage in tragedy where Fortune, although mentioned, has no

separate meaning as an irrational force because men are represented as responsible for their own fates, in most cases death as a punishment for crime, domestic or political. Far removed from Tamburlaine, Edward is acceptably in the Christian humanist tradition, as the use of Fortune indicates. There is throughout an emphasis on responsibility, on right action, not "policy." Edward takes its inspiration from the moral humanists, as Tamburlaine takes its inspiration from the naturalistic skepticism of Machiavelli.

* * * *

In general, then, one may say that all the main concepts of Fortune, as they were developed through the centuries or sprang into relief in the Renaissance, find expression in the plays of Christopher Marlowe. One may note also that there is, in the known Marlowe canon, a prevailing tendency away from naturalism, so far as emphasis on irrational elements like Fortune is concerned. When, in the Machiavellian tragedies, Barabas and the Guise obey the popular Machiavellian doctrines, "policy," they are struck down, and the world reverts to its proper Christian rulers. Yet it is this same "policy" carried to its farthest extreme that made Tamburlaine a glowing success. Faustus the scholar is the victim of pride, not the gigantic self-love of Tamburlaine by any means, and Faustus was thrust into hell forever.

Except for Tamburlaine and Dido, in the latter of which the use of Fortune is not significant, the plays are,

in their use of the traditional concepts of Fortune, in the Christian humanist tradition. The world of the plays is actually far more the world of Hooker than of Machiavelli. Men have free will; they may feel that they rise by Fortune, but Fortune plays little part in their lives. They commit crimes against the civil law and against the natural law, and they are punished, sometimes by man, sometimes by the direct hand of heaven. Only Tamburlaine, of all the heroes, the child of Fortune, the man of *virtus* who really turns Fortune's wheel for her, remains unpunished to the end. His death is not a judgment; Tamburlaine must die because he is mortal. The rebellious, naturalistic spirit is shown only in *Tamburlaine*.

How is this significant, and in what larger framework can one place these conclusions? *Tamburlaine* is an unusual play; it has little in common with any of the other plays of the time except its imitations; it has little, beyond the richness of its blank verse, in common with the woven, live dramas of Shakespeare. Without much character deliniation and without any character development, it seems almost a play about an idea, a view of the world. The view in *Tamburlaine* is essentially a rebellious view of the universe, at least in terms of the play; but what assurance can this give of the view of Christopher Marlowe? We know that Marlowe was a vigorous and not particularly lawful man, that a Tamburlaine might well appeal to his adventurous mind. It would seem safer to conclude, however, that Marlowe's mind is

not the prime example of the skeptical, hot rebel mind of Elizabethan literature. When one views Faustus, he finds a play as rich and strange as Tamburlaine but based on completely different philosophical premises. Even the poorer plays--especially the hopelessly corrupted Jew of Malta or The Massacre at Paris--where even Marlowe's lyric and romantic gift is not enough to save them, present a view opposed to the doctrines of Tamburlaine and more closely in line with the views of Christian humanistic writers like Chapman. If it may be argued that these were written for a popular stage, hurriedly for cash, under the surveillance of censors who would frown upon unconventional ideas, it must be pointed out that Tamburlaine was also tremendously popular.

Considering the present conventional dating of the Marlowe canon--and how many other plays Marlowe may have written to achieve the brilliance of what survives can never be known--one finds little consistent development of thought, if the plays represent the author's thought at all. Edward II, usually considered the last play, actually takes a step back from the philosophical positions of Faustus, in which every hint of the irrational has disappeared. And Faustus, according to all data available written within a year of Tamburlaine, is almost opposite in world view, with its own world of strict order. The inconsistency is unparalleled. Marlowe's works contain almost no certain key to the playwright's mind. He seemed to know both sides of his arguments and presented them with equal facility, so that they might been arguments

by different playwrights. Perhaps he intended his Tamburlaine only to excite the hero-hungry audience, his Faustus to frighten the superstitious groundlings.

In the greater number of his known plays, however, there is a pattern of ideas which reveal a traditional ideal of order, a humanist ideal as one might expect from a man as humanistically learned as Marlowe, for no other playwright displayed learning with more grace. In most of these plays, Marlowe presents a world in which chance and disorder are at best temporary; justice wins out; order is inevitably restored. Our modern virtue and not virtus carried the day.

Analyzing the plays in terms of chance and Fortune, order and Providence, one can conclude only that in Marlowe's work great inconsistencies loom above the magnificent rubble of the little that is left to us. The plays guard well their inventor's mind. The only documents which refer to Marlowe in detail describe him as an atheist,[1] but one was written by a Puritan whose testimony contradicts the legal evidence, and the other was written by a rival playwright attempting to justify himself to the Privy Council. The evidence of the plays would tend to discount Marlowe's rebellion against the main currents of his age. But again, there is little basis for more than conjecture. The safest conclusion is that the plays, taken as a whole, tend rather to a conventional set

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[1]The Kyd and Baines documents are reproduced in the appendix to C. F. Tucker Brooke, The Life of Marlowe (London, 1930).

of philosophical ideals if not to a conventional idiom and reveal a mind less rebellious in its work than has been generally supposed and suggested. Marlowe's use of the concepts of Fortune, if nothing else, supports this contention. Yet in his works, as in his life, the essential Marlowe is hidden as though by a conspiracy of design, the machinations of lesser men and time, which distorts almost beyond recognition what it cannot obliterate.

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